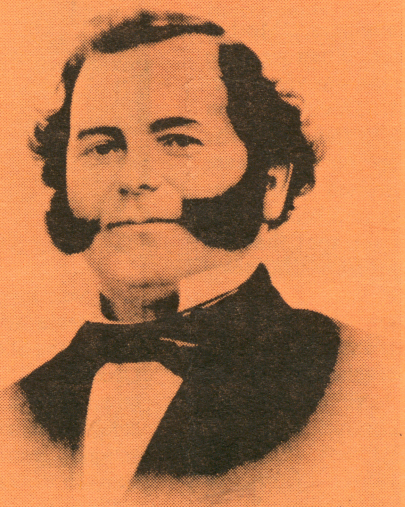
Contra Costa County Historical Society

BULLETIN

POST OFFICE BOX 190 MAY 1980 MARTINEZ, CALIFORNIA 94553

VALLEJO FAMILY AUTHOR TO SPEAK



General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo

"A labor of love could be called a bit trite, but it is hard to think of a better one when writing about how this book came to be," wrote reviewer John B. McGloin in describing Madie Brown Emparan's book, "The Vallejos of California," for the March, 1970 California Historical Society Quarterly.

Ten years later Mrs. Emparan, the widow of the last of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo's grandchildren, is still telling the world about the famous Vallejos and their part in the history of early California.

The Society is privileged to welcome Mrs. Emparan for our luncheon meeting speaker on Saturday, May 17, 12:30 p.m. at the historic Commandant's Residence, #1 Commandants Lane, Benicia. The luncheon, which will feature London broil, is $7.50 including tax and tip.

Mrs. Emparan, who's an historian, writer and conservationist, will share her own personal memories of the Vallejos, her experiences in researching and writing the definitive history of the family, and her involvement in the State Parks Commission.

In addition to the prominent speaker, the program will include a fascinating slide show on historic Benicia by member Kitty Leland. Miss Leland put the show together as a term paper for her docent training with the Oakland Museum. She worked closely with state historic park rangers on the project and was able to shoot a number of scenes and documents not generally seen by the public.

C.C. Co. History

MADIE BROWN EMPARAN

An avid devotion to the preservation of both natural resources and historic sites led to a career, a marriage and a place of her own in the state's history for Madie Brown Emparan.

The first woman appointed to the State Park Commission by then Governor James Rolph, Jr., Mrs. Emparan was involved in the acquisition of many of the 52 state historical parks that were ushered into the system during her tenure.

According to one of her daughters, "Mother was always ahead of her time. When we were growing up in San Francisco she was very civic-minded. She helped save Mt. Davidson from development and was active in the "Save the Redwoods League." Among the many state parks that particularly interested Mrs. Emparan were San Juan Bautista and Will Rogers in Southern California. But the spot that became a way of life for her was the last home of General Vallejo in Sonoma.

It was during these years that she met Richard Raoul Emparan who was also working with the State Division of Beaches and Parks and was endeavoring to have his famous grandfather's home, "Lachryma Montis," declared part of the state park network.

In her Vallejo book, Mrs. Emparan reported: "On July 7, 1933 the Vallejo home was dedicated . . . . Luisa Vallejo Emparan, who lived in the home and had long hoped that the State would buy and preserve her father's last home, handed the deed of "Lachryma Montis" on behalf of herself and the grown children of her late sister, Maria, to Hon. Joseph R. Knowland, member of the State Park Commission. Madie Brown suggested that Mrs. (Luisa) Emparan be appointed the first curator with a small salary." Vallejo's daughter served as curator until her death in 1943.

In 1947 Madie Brown, herself, was named curator of the two story wood-frame Victorian style Vallejo home. She served in this capacity until 1962, continuing the research she had begun many years before and tracking down and returning to the old home many of the family furnishings.

She describes her marriage to Emparan in "The Vallejos of California": "When Richard Raoul Emparan became a widower he selected Mrs. Edmund N. Brown (Madie Brown) who

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Raoul Emparan

. . . was largely responsible for the State of California acquiring "Lachryma Montis" as part of the State Park System." They were wed December 27, 1965, the bride wearing a blue gown with a full length mantilla of soft silk lace, an heirloom that had belonged to the groom's grandmother, Dona Francisca Benicia Carrillo de Vallejo.

Since the death of her husband in August, 1975 at the age of 89, Madie Brown Emparan continues her interest in "Lachryma Montis," frequently walking the short distance to the Vallejo house to talk with the hundreds of visitors who come to view the last home of the man who was once undisputed ruler of California north of San Francisco Bay.

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

In accordance with the Society's by-laws, the recently elected Board of Directors met to name the following offices from their number: President, Justice A.F. Bray; First Vice President, R. Stanley Alter; Second Vice President, Carol Leland; Secretary, James B. Jory; Treasurer, Barbara Dear.

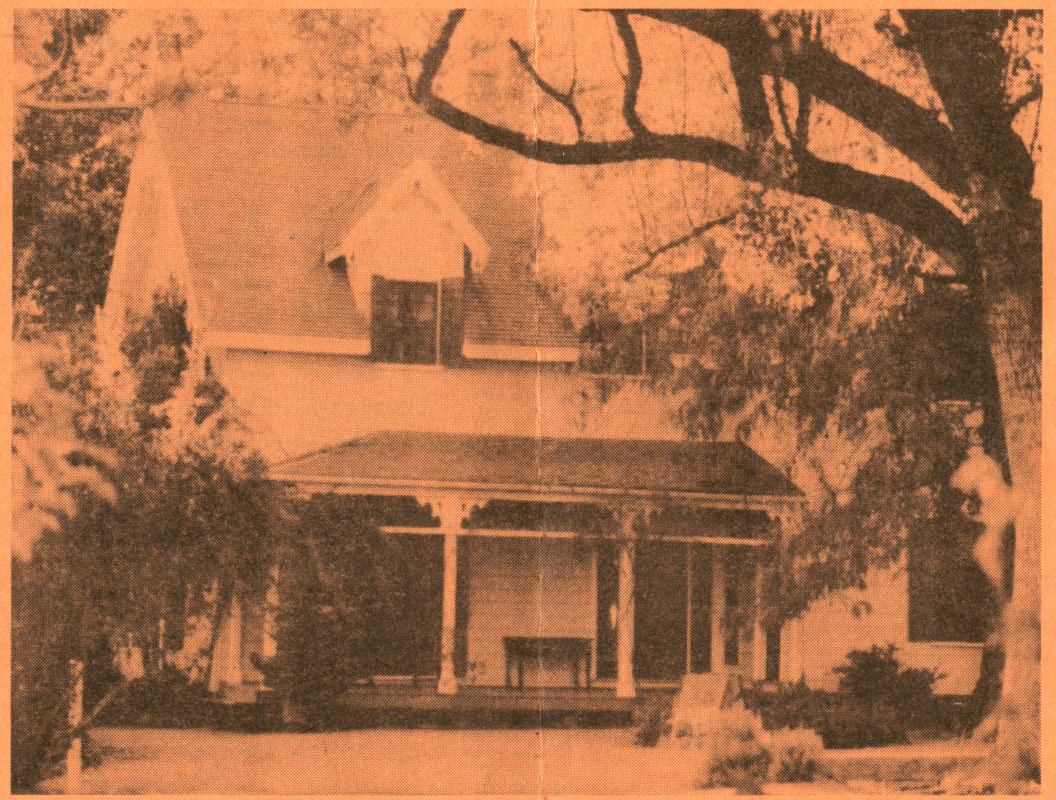
"THE VALLEJOS OF CALIFORNIA"

In the forward to Madie Brown Emparan's book, "The Vallejos of California," Francisco Vallejo McGettigan wrote: "No one, I feel sure, could have brought more careful research, more heartfelt enthusiasm to the accomplishment than my dear and versatile friend, Madie Brown.

Continued Mrs. McGettigan (General Vallejo's granddaughter) "She knows her General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo from cradle to grave as completely — no! more completely — than any one of the General's surviving relatives or descendants . . ."

Mrs. Emparan's own opinion of the biography is more modest. "I like to think of this book . . as a tapestry of a distinguished California family," she said in the book's Preface. "I have been merely the weaver, the colorful threads and designs are the Vallejos."

Much of the material, which deals with the General, his wife and his 16 children and their descendants, is based on Vallejo's letters. It has been called the "complete source book covering the Vallejo story."



Vallejo Home in Sonoma — "Lachryma Montis"

LUNCHEON SITE IS PART OF HISTORIC ARSENAL

We'll be enjoying our May luncheon amid memories of historic Benicia, where what is now an elegant restaurant was once the home of the commandant of the U.S. Benicia Arsenal. The Commandant's home, built in 1860, is an imposing 20 room mansion of classic Georgian design. It has 14 foot ceilings and twenty four inch thick brick walls. Woods for the wainscoting, parquet floors, paneling, stair rails and balustrades were brought around the Horn. In the latter half of the 19th century, many social functions of the elite of Bay Area society centered around this home. Poet Stephen Vincent Benet lived here with his parents from 1906 to 1911 while his father was the Commanding Officer of the Post. The structure is but one of many included in Benicia's popular historical walking tour.

Maps of the city's historic points will be available for those who wish to tour old Benicia following the luncheon meeting.

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Historical Society
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First Vice President ..... R. Stanley Alter
Second Vice President ..... Carol Leland
Secretary ..... James B. Jory
Treasurer ..... Barbara Dear

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MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Luncheon and Program

Speaker: Madie Brown Emparan

Slide Show: Kitty Leland

Date: May 17, 1980

Place: The Commandant's Residence
#1 Commandants Lane
Benicia

Time: 12:30 p.m.
Luncheon $7.50

***Reservations:** J.B. Jory, Secretary
P.O. Box 190
Martinez, CA 94553
Phone: 228-4534

**Because of limited seating, members will be given preference for available reservations.*

DIRECTIONS: Take 5th St. exit from Highway 780 at Benicia, go left on Military East Highway, past the main gate and into the Old Benicia Arsenal.

(Optional self guided walking tour of historic Benicia following the meeting.)